

NSC BRIEFING

23 July 1958

LAOS

- I. Premier-designate Souvanna Phouma is under heavy pressure to lead a "reform government" composed largely of young anti-Communists from civil service and military.
- II. Pressure coming from crown, army commanders and new organization of young elite--Committee for Defense of National Interest.
 - A. These elements drawn together and galvanized by the 4 May electoral debacle, ineffectiveness of discredited conservative politicians, and deteriorating security situation.
- III. Souvanna cooperating with reform groups but may hedge on key portfolios.
 - A. He favors 16-man cabinet--half deputies, half young reformists.
 - B. He by nature disposed to equivocal action.
- IV. Conservative politicians unlikely to relish being swept out by "clean broom."
 - A. They could combine with left opposition to bloc investiture of "reform" government.
- V. In that event, anti-Communists plan to have crown close assembly and impose anti-Communist government.
 - A. Army to maintain security and crush anti-government moves.
 1. Army commanding general helping formulate plan; has said he will limit role of army to preserve veneer of constitutional legitimacy.

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